



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPDATE: OPERATION ICE PALACE
FORMER OWNER OF SIMS GENERAL STORE SENTENCED
FOR METH CONSPIRACY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that a former owner of Sims General Store in McDonald County, Mo., has been sentenced in federal court for her involvement in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. This sentencing is the result of Operation Ice Palace, a long-term investigation into the illegal sale of large quantities of over-the-counter cold medications to methamphetamine manufacturers in southwest Missouri. Operation Ice Palace resulted in a series of indictments by a federal grand jury against 53 defendants.

“Methamphetamine is a chronic problem that we are attacking on several fronts,” Graves said. “Operation Ice Palace targeted businesses that provided meth cooks with pseudoephedrine, a primary ingredient used to manufacture methamphetamine. By choking off the illegal supply line of ingredients, we’re making an impact in the amount of meth that can be manufactured and distributed.”

Sherry Woodard, 45, of Washburn, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Ortrie D. Smith on Jan. 20, 2005, to 10 years in federal prison without parole. **Woodard** was owner of Sims General Store during the time of the conspiracy.

On June 18, 2004, **Woodard** and co-defendants **Lonnie Weston**, 58, of McDonald County, and **Frances Duckett**, 38, of Pineville, Mo., were convicted by a federal jury. They were each found guilty of participating in a methamphetamine conspiracy that resulted in the manufacture and distribution of between 1.5 and 5 kilograms of methamphetamine. In addition, **Woodard** was found guilty of distributing pseudoephedrine. **Lonnie Weston** was also found guilty of possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. Using ingredients obtained from **Woodard’s** store, Graves said, **Lonnie Weston** manufactured methamphetamine and sold it to others to distribute.

On Sept. 14, 2004, **Lonnie Weston** was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison without parole. A sentencing hearing for **Duckett**, originally scheduled for Jan. 20, 2005, was continued and has not been rescheduled.

Woodard is one of nine defendants charged in an Oct. 16, 2003, federal indictment. Among those co-defendants:

* **Billy Richard Brassfield**, 55, of Pineville, Mo., was sentenced on Sept. 13, 2004, to seven years and three months in federal prison without parole. On May 20, 2004, **Brassfield** pleaded guilty to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy. During the conspiracy, **Brassfield** also owned and operated Sims General Store. From as early as 1999 to October 2000, **Brassfield** diverted pseudoephedrine that he obtained for the store to **Lonnie Weston** for the purpose of manufacturing methamphetamine. **Brassfield** also allowed methamphetamine to be manufactured on his property.

* **Kevin Davis**, 43, of Exeter, Mo., was sentenced on Sept. 13, 2004, to 10 years and 11 months in federal prison without parole. On May 19, 2004, **Davis** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, **Davis** admitted that he was present during 10 to 15 methamphetamine cooks and would act as a lookout during the manufacturing process. **Davis** was originally arrested on March 21, 2001, driving a stolen vehicle in McDonald County. Upon searching the vehicle, law enforcement officers discovered components of a methamphetamine laboratory, including lithium batteries, coffee filters, empty bottles of pseudoephedrine and anhydrous ammonia.

* **Michele Kreitel**, 33, of Seligman, Mo., was sentenced on Sept. 13, 2004, to three years in federal prison without parole. On May 19, 2004, **Kreitel** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. **Kreitel** admitted that she purchased methamphetamine and assisted in the manufacture of methamphetamine between January 1999 and March 14, 2002.

* **Jody Weston**, 22, of Washburn, Mo., was sentenced on Sept. 13, 2004, to seven years and three months in federal prison without parole. On May 20, 2004, **Jody Weston** pleaded guilty to participating in the conspiracy, which resulted in the manufacture and distribution of between 1.5 and 5 kilograms of methamphetamine between January 1999 and March 14, 2002, in McDonald County, Mo. **Jody Weston** admitted that he assisted in cooking methamphetamine and acted, at times, as a lookout during the manufacturing process. He also admitted that he distributed methamphetamine to others.

* **Craig Guinn**, 41, of Westville, Okla., was sentenced on Sept. 13, 2004, to five years in federal prison without parole. On May 19, 2004, **Guinn** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, **Guinn** admitted that he assisted in gathering precursors for the manufacture of methamphetamine. Specifically, he admitted that he participated in the theft of a 1,000-gallon anhydrous tank in Granby, Mo.

* **Rebecca Singleton**, 37, of Ginger Blue, Mo., pleaded guilty on 18, 2004, to participating in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. A sentencing hearing has not yet

been scheduled.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall D. Eggert. It was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team), the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Southwest Missouri Drug Task Force, and the McDonald County Sheriff's Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow